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UNCLAS ROME 001399

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FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

STATE FOR G, E, OES/PCI, PRM/P AND IO/EDA
INFO USAID FOR A/AID, DCHA/FFP LANDIS, DCHA/OFDA MENGHETTI
INFO GENEVA FOR RMA AND NKYLOH/USAID

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNDP WORLD ALLIANCE OF CITIES AGAINST POVERTY FORUM

1. SUMMARY. THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF CITIES AGAINST POVERTY (WACAP) HELD ITS 4TH FORUM IN ROME FROM MARCH 31 THROUGH APRIL 2, 2004. ITS PURPOSE WAS TO EXAMINE HOW ELECTED MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES MIGHT SHARE AND SEEK WAYS OF ACHIEVING MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. ON THE WHOLE, THE INTERVENTIONS WERE INFORMATIVE AND BUILT GREATER AWARENESS IN DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED STATES ABOUT DEVELOPMENT GOALS, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. END SUMMARY.

2. AS THE DESIGNATED SCOREKEEPER FOR THE MDGS, UNDP IS TASKED WITH SPREADING AWARENESS WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM TO WORK COHERENTLY WITH HOST GOVERNMENTS TO MONITOR, ANALYZE AND REPORT ON MDGS. UNDP FACILITATES NATIONAL MDG REPORTS, WHICH ARE BEGINNING TO PROVIDE DATA ON PROGRESS ACHIEVED TOWARD THE MDGS. AS SUCH, THE REPORTS MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO COMPARE DATA BETWEEN REGIONS, COUNTRIES AND SECTORS. CURRENTLY, 52 COUNTRIES HAVE PRODUCED MDG STATUS REPORTS. BY THE END OF THE YEAR, APPROXIMATELY 100 ARE EXPECTED. RECOGNIZING THAT MDGS CANNOT BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT THE CONTRIBUTION OF MUNICIPALITIES, UNDP ALSO HELPED TO CREATE THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF CITIES AGAINST POVERTY (WACAP), WHICH CURRENTLY HAS 155 MEMBER CITIES. THE FORUM INCLUDED PARTICIPANTS FROM 95 COUNTRIES REPRESENTING 140 CITIES, 13 ASSOCIATIONS OF CITIES, AND ABOUT 80 PARTICIPANTS FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS.

3. SELECTED INTERVENTIONS. THE PLENARY SESSION BEGAN WITH A WELL-RECEIVED SPEECH BY WALTER VELTRONI, MAYOR OF ROME, WHO SPOKE ABOUT ROME'S ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMS, ENCOURAGED ATTENDEES TO PERSEVERE DESPITE THE DIFFICULT CHALLENGES OF THE MDGS, AND TRANSFORM THE IMPOSSIBLE TO THE POSSIBLE.

4. UNDP ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR BRUCE JENKS CALLED FOR A SPECIAL FOCUS ON AFRICA AND ENCOURAGED DEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO DO MORE, PARTICULARLY CONSIDERING THE DECREASE BY 50 PERCENT IN OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA) DURING THE LAST DECADE.

5. EUSEBIO LEAL, UN GOODWILL AMBASSADOR, OPINED THAT RICH COUNTRIES SHOULD INCREASE ODA AND END AGRICULTURAL POLICIES THAT DESTROY THE MARKETS OF POOR COUNTRIES, E.G., REDUCE AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES. BECAUSE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS PROVIDE BASIC SERVICES, CITIES ARE APPROPRIATE ENTITIES TO BUILD POLITICAL WILL FOR BETTER EDUCATION, WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE, AND OTHER SERVICES.

6. FAROUK TEBBAL, OF UN HABITAT, MENTIONED THAT TODAY ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE WORLD'S POOR ARE URBAN DWELLERS, AND WITHIN 5 TO 10 YEARS OVER 50 PERCENT WILL BE POOR. IN AFRICA, THE TWO MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGES ARE RAPID URBANIZATION AND GROWING POVERTY.

7. WFP DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SHEILA SISULU DISCUSSED WFP'S WORK IN TERMS OF MDGS, NOT ONLY THOSE THAT PERTAIN TO POVERTY AND HUNGER, BUT ALSO TO MDGS GROUNDED IN GENDER EQUALITY, NUTRITION, AND HIV/AIDS ISSUES. MS. SISULU WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE PRESENCE OF THE FORUM'S PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVED, "ONLY WITH A BROAD PARTNERSHIP OF CITIZENS, CITIES, GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS [CAN] WE HOPE TO MEET THE MDGS."

8. PETER SCHATZER, CHIEF OF IOM, EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT MANAGING URBAN MIGRATION AND POLICIES THAT ARE CONGRUENT WITH DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE.

9. IAN MCCLELLAN, ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR, UNOSAT, GAVE AN INTERESTING PRESENTATION ON USING SATELLITE IMAGERY TO MITIGATE DISASTERS. UNOSAT WAS CREATED BY THE UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH (UNITAR) AND IS EXECUTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR PROJECT SERVICES (UNOPS) TO PROVIDE GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION TO UN ORGANIZATIONS, GOVERNMENTS, AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS TO RESPOND TO HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND INCORPORATE GEOGRAPHIC MAPPING TO DISASTER REDUCTION AND PREVENTION SCENARIOS. UNOSAT CAN PROVIDE GIS TURNKEY SOLUTIONS AND SERVICES, INCLUDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.

10. A FEW INTERVENTIONS WERE STRAIGHTFORWARD REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE BY STAKEHOLDERS FROM THE DEVELOPING WORLD TO THE DEVELOPED WORLD.

11. COMMENT. MOST ALL OF THE INTERVENTIONS WERE PREPARED SPEECHES, AND THE FORUM DID NOT GENERATE MUCH DIALOGUE AMONG PARTICIPANTS. NEVERTHELESS, THE INTERVENTIONS WERE INFORMATIVE

AND BUILD GREATER AWARENESS IN DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED STATES ABOUT DEVELOPMENT GOALS, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. WITH APPROPRIATE LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS, MUCH CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED DURING THE 10 YEARS REMAINING TO ACHIEVE THE MDGS. WE SHARE THE HOPE AND ARE WORKING TOWARD THE DAY WHEN NO ONE WILL BE CONDEMNED TO GO HUNGRY. HALL

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2004ROME01399 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED